



State Representative Diana Urban

Dear Neighbor:

As I write, the legislature is in special session grappling with the issues of Eminent Domain, Campaign Reform and the rapidly escalating cost of Winter Heating for Connecticut residents. With these difficult problems, which affect us all, and many others, I am working to insure that the people of our district and our state come out on top in the process.

Recently, after five years of advocating for "Budgeting for Results," I was named Co-Chair of the Legislature's Working Committee charged with Results Based Accountability. Especially in these times of federal fiscal stress, it is essential for us to look seriously at efficiency and accountability in our state budget process. And, I will be working closely with fellow legislators, as well as the Governor's office, to make this a reality.

I continue to be your watchdog in Hartford, alert to protect our quality of life and our children's future, while assuring that our tax dollars are spent wisely.

In this report I would like to share with you progress we are making and my plans for the next session.

As always, please contact me at 535-4429 with any problems or concerns you may have.

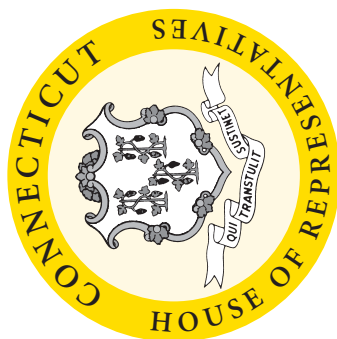
Sincerely,

Diana



Rep. Urban meets with students from Stonington during their visit to the State Capitol this spring.

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State Representative

DIANA URBAN

Proudly Serving the 43rd District

North Stonington ★ Stonington



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2005 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



State Representative

DIANA URBAN

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Representative Urban speaks on the floor of the House during the 2005 Legislative Session.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Clean Elections

I have been an advocate of Clean Elections since becoming a legislator. It is my firm belief that special-interest dollars should not be driving policy. I also believe that the daunting task of raising money scares people away from running for office.

The bills that we considered this session would have created a system for matching public funds for candidates who chose to run under Clean Elections. Unfortunately, there were issues that couldn't be worked out between the House and the Senate. As of this writing, we are back in Special Session to address these issues, and we have the chance to lead the nation in Clean Elections. I intend to do all that I can to make this a reality.

ENVIRONMENT

Advocacy

As you know, I have always been a firm supporter of environmental issues because I believe that a clean environment is not only a gift to our children, but economically important and beneficial to our health. This past session, I was involved in legislation that addressed Climate Change, Clean Cars and Farmland Preservation. Each bill is a part of a process to maintain the quality of life for our children, our seniors and our families.

Additionally, we passed legislation that directs state agencies to develop a plan to reduce Diesel Emissions from school buses, passenger buses and trucks. Diesel fuel emissions contain carcinogen and other toxins that are known to cause asthma, heart attacks, respiratory disease and premature death.

Children are particularly vulnerable to toxins because of the damage that can be caused to their developing organs and nervous system. To protect them, we passed legislation restricting the use of lawn care Pesticides (neurotoxins) in Preschool facilities, Elementary Schools and Childcare centers. The legislation does make exception for the use of pesticides when necessary to eliminate an immediate threat to health such as mosquitoes or ticks.

Together with likeminded legislators and tireless advocates, I will continue the incremental process of building an environment that has clean water, clean air and family-owned farms.

Our Fishing Fleet

The continuing problem of lobster die-offs was the impetus for legislation creating a lobster restoration program. This program has commercial fishermen mark female lobsters and then release them for further reproduction.

On the last night of session, this bill had not made it to the floor of the House. Rep. Lenny Winkler (R-Groton) and I thought that it was important to our fishing families that we work together to save this bill. We went to House leaders and pleaded our case. It was wonderful to get a positive response in the late hours, and the bill was called and passed. Although there was no funding attached to the bill, we will again work together with fellow legislators to make that a reality.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Stem Cell Research

This year we became the 3rd state to invest in human adult and embryonic stem cell research. Proponents believe this holds great promise for developing cures to many types of disease and injury. Our bill provides a "safe haven" for stem cell researchers, establishes a regulatory framework for conducting research, and bans human cloning. This legislation also includes a ten-year, \$100 million commitment designed to keep Connecticut's best and brightest scientific minds here, to attract new ones from around the nation and world, and promote bio-medical business development.

Tick Eradication

Working with a dedicated citizen's group from Mason's Island, spearheaded by Ruth Waller, we were able to get tick eradication added to the list of activities permitted for Fire Districts. This is of particular importance to Mason's Island, as a successful pilot program was ending, and residents were eager to continue it. Delay would have given the tick population the opportunity to rebound. We are hoping that the Mason's Island's program can be used as a model in Connecticut to help reduce the incidence of tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease. Kudos to all my wonderful helpers; their tenacity paid off.

Prescription Drug Access

There are 44 million Americans, including 407,000 in Connecticut, living without health insurance. In just two years 50,000 more of our neighbors, not less, are living unprotected against financial ruin, gambling that they will not have a medical catastrophe and putting off normal and timely medical care. In essence, the Emergency Room serves as their health care of last resort. This is neither fair nor efficient and results in sick families and high bills for the state.

This year we set up a working group to study how to develop a prescription drug-purchasing program or make it possible to join an existing program to help Connecticut residents. This will particularly help our seniors who bear the biggest burden from the high cost of prescription drugs, to purchase at a lower rate. The report must be done by January 2006 and then we can proceed from there.

MICROENTERPRISE/SMALL BUSINESS

Advocacy

In my quest to focus attention on microenterprise, the strong advocacy of the Community Economic Development Fund has been priceless. This year we established the Microenterprise Resource Group (MERG), Connecticut's first statewide organization dedicated to the growth and health of microenterprise.

In addition, with the help of Governor Rell, we established a loan pool of \$4 million for Small Business in Eastern Connecticut. \$2 million was bonded by the State, and \$2 million was matched by area banks...a public/private partnership to help diversify the economy in Eastern Connecticut. We hope to further expand our efforts with a \$500,000 bond for microenterprise in the Bond package. These efforts will all help Connecticut fill the gap created by off shoring and out sourcing. Keeping small business and microenterprise healthy and vital creates an economic web that keeps dollars circulating in our communities.

Health Insurance

Health insurance costs to our essential small businesses and microenterprises are skyrocketing. To ease this burden, we passed a law to provide greater flexibility in health insurance policies, extend savings to small employers, and increase access to the State Comptroller's small business MEHIP program. I was particularly happy that Comptroller Wyman came out to speak to our small businesses and explain that the bill now allows her, and groups that offer similar plans, to pool rates for small business. Potentially this can bring rates down by as much as 15%. The bill also allows these smaller employer plans to account for savings when establishing rates. Finally, the bill extends MEHIP benefits to individuals eligible for retirement benefits and to employees of federally qualified nonprofit organizations that receive public funds or contract with the state.

BUDGET ENDING JUNE 30, 2005 THE 2005 GENERAL FUND AND THE SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION FUND SPENDS \$14.4 BILLION

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

